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A Letter to BILLY GRAHAM

By R. M. BELL

Dr. Billy Graham
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dear Billy:

I thank you for your letter of March 20th, asking for prayer. I am writing to say that we have prayed for you in the past and shall continue to do so. It has not been my good fortune to meet you personally, but I have read your letters, listened to your broadcasts, and have often read your newspaper column entitled "My Answer." I have joined with the multitudes in admiring you and in praying for your success. Your unshakable faith, your zeal, your constant appeal to the Bible as the word of God, your recognition of the fact of sin, and your exaltation of Christ as the Savior, serve to stimulate confidence in your spiritual leadership. But, like the rich young ruler whom Jesus loved, "one thing thou lackest."

Apparently, you do not have the Bible answer to the most important question that a sinner ever asked.

Some time ago, a high school Senior who recognized that she was on "the way to hell," wrote to you and asked you what she should do. I was amazed at the answer which you gave to her. I am quoting below her question, your answer, and the reason for my amazement.

The Girl's Question

"I'm all mixed up and I know it. I am a senior in high school and run with a gang. We have tried everything—and I mean everything—and I know I am going to hell. My mother was a Christian but she is dead and my father is busy and away most of the time. I don't want to live like this and I am afraid to die like this but I feel like I am chained to the devil. What can I do?" . . . B. M.

Your Answer

"Your address is not clear and I cannot write you a personal letter. You have reached the place where you know you are a sinner, are sorry you are a sinner and want help. Strange as it may sound you are on good ground because Christ wants to help and save you but He cannot help the self-sufficient and proud. You feel like you are chained to the devil, but Christ is stronger than the devil, and will release you from his power. Please do just as I say: Get in some quiet place and kneel down and tell Jesus all about your troubles. Tell Him about those things you have been doing with the gang—all of them. Tell Him you are sorry but that you keep on doing them. Ask Him to forgive you and to come and live in your heart and give you the power to overcome the temptations you face every day. Then, thank Him for hearing you and being your Savior and from right then talk to Him anytime during the day or night. The question will soon come as to whether you should commit some sin. Stop right then and ask Him to help you. Ask Him whether the place you are going is a place He can go with you. Ask Him if the thing you are planning to do is something He will be with you while you are doing it. Get a Bible right away and start reading it. I would suggest that you take the Gospel of John, in the New Testament, and read it straight through. Then read it again. Then read it again. Ask God to speak to you through the Bible and ask His help to do what it tells you to do. Also, turn to the Old Testament and start reading the Book of Proverbs, one chapter each day. Do this for many months. If you will do this I can promise you your heart will be filled with joy and peace."

The Reason for my Amazement

You are a Bible preacher. No present-day preacher whom I have heard appeals to the authority of the Bible as often as you do. Your most oft-repeated phrase is, "The Bible says." Why, then, did you not tell the girl what the Bible says?

Here is a girl who is a sinner and who knows that she is a sinner. She knows that she is headed for hell. She wants to change her course and start toward heaven where she thinks her mother is. Says she, "I don't want to live like this, and I am afraid to die like this; but I feel like I am chained to the devil. What can I do?"

The girl really wanted to know what to do to be saved. Why did you not give her the Bible answer? Instead, you told her to "go to some quiet place and kneel down" and tell Jesus what He already knew. You then told her to ask Christ to do what He has already promised to do, whenever she does what the Bible says that she must do. After she asks Him to do what He has already promised to do (whenever she does what the Bible says she must do) she is then told to thank Him for doing what He has not promised to do, until she does what the Bible says she must do.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Five times, in the New Testament, the question "What must I do?" is asked. Five times it is answered. Let us see "What the Bible says."

(Continued on page two)

THE BLUE AND WHITE

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Letter to Billy Graham

(Continued from previous page)

1. Love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbor as thyself.

The question was first asked by a lawyer who said "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Answer: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" . . . "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." . . . "This do and thou shalt live." Luke 10:25-28

2. Keep the commandments, sell and give.

Later, a rich young ruler came to Jesus saying, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" I am aware that any good Baptist preacher would have told the young man, "You cannot DO anything to inherit eternal life. Eternal life is a gift." But unfortunately Jesus had not been properly instructed in Baptist doctrine; so He said to the young man, "Thou knowest the commandments." Then He quoted the ones which a young man was most apt to break: "Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor thy mother and thy father." When the young ruler asserted that he had kept these from his "youth up," Jesus declared, "Yet lackest thou one thing: Sell all that thou hast and distribute to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." Luke 18:18-22

3. Repent and be baptized.

We next hear the question being asked by some people who had heard Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost. When they believed what Peter had said about Christ, they asked "What shall we do?" They did not add the words "to inherit eternal life." But, in the light of Peter's sermon, they had seen themselves as grievous sinners and wanted to know what to do to get rid of their sins. "And Peter said unto them, 'Repent ye and

be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for (unto) the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" Acts 2:38

If Peter's answer proves anything at all, it proves that he was not a Baptist. I have lived most of my years among Baptists, and I like them immensely, but I have never heard a Baptist preacher quote Peter in answering the question "What must I do to be saved?"

4. "Arise and Be Baptized and Wash away thy Sins."

After Saul and his gang had driven the believers out of Jerusalem, he was on his way to Damascus in search of other Christians to be punished. Before reaching Damascus, he saw a brilliant light and he heard a voice saying "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou Lord? and he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest." Acts 22:6-8 "And I said, What shall I do Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all the things which are appointed for thee to do. (Acts 22:10) Acts 9:6 reads, "and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Saul went into the city to the house of a man named Judas. After Saul had spent three days in fasting and prayer, the Lord sent a disciple named Ananias to tell him what to do. "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts 22:12-16

May I hasten to assure you, Dr. Graham, that I do not believe that water can wash away sins. It is "the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth us from all sin." But, in the light of what "the Bible says," when was the blood applied to Saul's sins? Was it when he saw the light?, or when he heard the voice?, or when he believed the voice?, or when he said "What will you have me to do Lord?," or during his fasting and prayer? According to Acts 22:16, was it not when he submitted to baptism in "the name of the Lord"? Otherwise, how can we explain the command given by Ananias, the messenger of the Lord?

5. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

After Saul, now called Paul, had been

preaching for many years, he went to Philippi for an evangelistic crusade. But before the crusade was finished, he and his song leader, Silas, were beaten and thrown into jail. At midnight, when Paul and Silas were singing praises to God and the prisoners were listening, some perhaps in amazement and others in distrust, an earthquake badly damaged the jail, and badly frightened the jailor, who "came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas." We do not know what Paul and Silas said to him while he was prostrate before them, but from what we know of Paul we can be sure that he was preaching. Be that as it may, the jailor "brought them out and said Sirs, 'What must I DO to be saved?' "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." But this was not their complete answer. It was merely the introductory sentence. Following that introductory sentence "they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." What did the word of the Lord include? It included the full answer to the jailor's question.

The word of the Lord began with faith, but unlike many modern sermons, it did not end with faith. Among other things, it included repentance. We know this to be true, because the jailor gave evidence of repentance when he took Paul and Silas at the close of the sermon and washed their bloody backs and their bloody clothes. What better evidence of repentance can a man give than that which the jailor gave—a sincere attempt to undo the wrongs which he had helped to perpetrate. This was "fruit worthy of repentance."

The word of the Lord included baptism. Otherwise, the jailor certainly would not have been baptized that night. After Paul and Silas had spoken "the word of the Lord" unto him "and to all that were in his house, he took them (Paul and Silas) and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them (back) into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Acts 16:31-36

Five Different Answers

Five times the same question, "What Must I do?" was asked. Five different answers were given. Does that prove that there are different ways for different people to be saved? Certainly not! Then why should there be so many different answers to the same question?

The answer is simple. The inquirers fall naturally into two groups: those who were still under the law of Moses and those who were under the gospel of Christ. The lawyer and the rich ruler were under the law, and for salvation were told, in different words, to keep the law. In answer to the lawyer, Jesus replied "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" To the ruler, he said, "Thou knowest the commandments." But the law of Moses as a plan of salvation ended with the arrival of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Therefore, the Pentecostians, Saul of Tarsus and the Philippian jailor, were living in the new dispensation—the dispensation not of Moses, but of Christ. Prior to Pentecost, people were

saved by keeping the law. The new dispensation was inaugurated with the descent of the Holy Spirit. From that time forward people have been saved by faith in Christ. But faith in Christ implies obedience to His command. He Himself said "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Luke 6:46. He also said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15. And, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." John 15:10. Again, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." John 15:14. John says, "And hereby we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." I-John 2:3-4.

The writer of Hebrews says, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect he became the author of salvation to all them that obey him." Heb. 5:8-9. Peter said that God gives the Holy Spirit "to them who obey Him." Acts 5:32. Peter exclaims, "What shall be the end of them who obey not the gospel of God?" Paul answers, "... the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." II Thes. 1:7-8. Faith and obedience are inseparable.

John 3:16 is a favorite text, but who preaches on John 3:36? "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (Am. Standard Version) Thus, it is clear that faith in Christ necessarily implies obedience to his commands.

Faith that does not lead to a surrender to Christ and to obedience to his commands is not Bible faith. It is not the faith that saves. It is mere mental assent or what James calls dead faith. (James 2:26)

The Pentecostians

The Pentecostians were not told to believe on Christ, because they already believed. The demonstration of the Holy Spirit and Peter's sermon had convinced them that God had "made that same Jesus" whom they had crucified "both Lord and Christ." To those inquirers who so believed, Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2: 38) "They that gladly received his word, (believed), were baptized (obeyed). (V. 41)...." "And the word of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of priests were OBEDIENT to the faith." (Acts 6: 7).

Saul of Tarsus

When Ananias went to Saul to tell him what he "must do," he said nothing about faith, nothing about repentance, nothing about confession. Why not? Simply because Saul was already a believer who had repented and had confessed. But he had not been baptized. Therefore, Ananias, the messenger of the Lord, commanded him to "arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins." Acts 22:16.

Can you tell me, Dr. Graham, into which denomination was Saul baptized? I cannot believe that it was Baptist, because no Baptist minister of my acquaintance would ever quote Acts 22:16 at a baptismal service.

The Jailor

The Philippian jailor was told to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," because at the time his question was answered he was not a believer. The pentecostians who were believers were told to repent and be baptized. Saul, who had believed and repented, was told only to be baptized. The Jailor, who had not taken the first step, was told to begin by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Then Paul and Silas "spake unto him the word of the Lord." After having heard "the word of the Lord" the jailor repented (evidenced by his conduct) "and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." Thus, the Bible answer is clear. There is no confusion or conflict. To those who would be saved

The Bible Says

1. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ
2. "Repent and
3. "be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

In none of the above quoted passages was anything said about confession, but Jesus made it clear that he wanted his followers to make a public declaration of their faith in Him. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven." Mt. 10:32-33. This command to confess him may have grown out of the challenge of "the Jews who had agreed already, that if any man did confess Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." John 9: 22. Be that as it may, he requires that he be publicly confessed. Paul says, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Romans 10:10.

The next time a sinner asks "What shall I do?" tell him what the Bible says. Tell him to believe, to repent, to confess Christ, and to be baptized "into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Tell him that he is then "a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17) and that he should observe "all things whatsoever" the Lord has commanded. (Mt. 28:20) Tell him that a Christian should "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, (because) if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the

world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever (I John 2:15-17).

Tell him that Peter said, "Add to your faith virtue and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall." II Pet. 2: 5-10

Dr. Graham, we are praying that you will tell the San Franciscans what the Bible says that they must do to be saved. We are praying that you will not stop with the introductory sentence, but that you will tell them the whole story. But if you do, the multitudes will forsake you, and you will be as lonely as Jesus was when they forsook Him. I can assure you, however, on Bible authority, that it is better to travel the narrow way with the faithful few than to go Broadway with the multitudes.

If I am in error, please forgive me and correct me.

Prayerfully yours,

R. M. Bell

P.S. —You may wonder why I omitted any reference to the thief-on-the-cross. I did so because the thief did not ask what to do to be saved. I add this postscript because the thief is so often used as proof that no one has to do anything to be saved. Because people are looking for a short-cut, bargain-price salvation, they ignore the evidence that the thief believed, repented, confessed, and was baptized. In all probability, he was a convert either of John or of Jesus, but his conversion did not abate the penalty of his crime. Matthew says, "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand... Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea and all the region round about the Jordan and they were baptized of him in the river confessing their sins." Mt. 3: 1-6. Mark says, "John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the country of Judaea and all they of Jerusalem, and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan confessing their sins." Mark 1: 4-5.

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Letter to Billy Graham

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If the thief lived in or near Jerusalem, and if we are to accept Mark's statement at its face value, the thief repented and was baptized in the river Jordan confessing his sins. He might have been arrested on the basis of that confession. Who knows!

If, however, he was not a disciple of John, he could have been a disciple of Christ. John says, "After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized." John 3:22.... "When, therefore, the Lord knew how the pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (his disciples did the baptizing) he left Judaea and departed into Galilee." John 4:1-3. The thief, if not already a disciple of John, may have been one of the Judaeans converts of Jesus.

It is clear, therefore, that the salvation bargain-hunter who thinks that the thief was saved on the basis of a single ambiguous sentence uttered in his dying moments, is grasping at something less than the proverbial straw.

Moreover, let us remember that the thief, like the lawyer and the rich young ruler, lived under the law. If he was saved, he was saved according to the law. I say "if," because we have no proof that he was saved. Personally, I believe that he was saved, but I do so because I was so taught from childhood and not because we have any proof thereof. It is true that Jesus had power to forgive sins, even before the terms of salvation were proclaimed; but the thief did not ask for forgiveness, nor for eternal life; nor did Jesus offer either. The thief merely asked, "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." No man under heaven, except the thief and the Lord, knows what he meant by that request. Anyone may conjecture, suppose, or assume; but nobody knows. Nor, does anyone know what the Lord meant by His reply: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." What did he mean by such a statement? Why didn't he give the thief a direct answer and say "Yes, I will remember you when I come into my kingdom." Was this the Lord's way of saying "There is no time here to discuss the affairs of the kingdom. I will see you on the other side?"

What is paradise? No one knows. Funk & Wagnalls' Dictionary defines it as "The Garden of Eden; the intermediate state or place where souls await the resurrection; Heaven; any region or state of surpassing delight, a park or pleasure ground." These are merely some of the meanings which modern usage has attached to the word. In an attempt to define paradise, the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible uses such words as park, pleasure ground, enclosure, orchard, etc. The later Jews distinguished between "a supernal and infernal paradise."

Certainly Jesus did not mean all of these things. Whether or not he meant any of them, nobody knows. He certainly did not mean heaven—that is, the heaven where God is. When he met Mary in the Garden on the resurrection morning, he told her not to touch him "for I am not yet ascended to my Father."

Jno. 20:17. Thus, we know that Jesus did not go immediately to heaven.

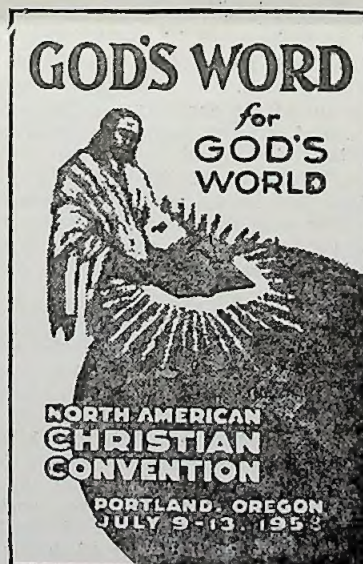
Perhaps Peter gives us the answer when he refers to Christ as having been "put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit; by which he also went and preached to the spirits in prison." I Peter 3:19.

Thus, we have no positive proof that the thief was saved. If he was saved, he was saved under the law, before the Gospel terms of salvation had been proclaimed. Those who wish to be saved like the thief on the cross are craving an impossibility. It cannot be done now, because we are living in the Gospel dispensation.

The new dispensation began with the coming of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the Gospel on the first Pentecost after the resurrection. From that day till the end of time,—or until God changes the plan—all who are saved must be saved according to the terms of the Gospel! These terms are set forth in the Book of Acts. They are not found in the Book of John nor in Proverbs. The Book of John was written for the single purpose of proving that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." It states that anyone who believes the facts set forth in the Book "might" (or may) have life through his name." But John does not tell, except in figurative language, how this life is obtained. He quotes Jesus as saying to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." (3:5) But he makes no attempt to explain the details of the "birth." The Book of Proverbs consists primarily of a collection of pithy sayings that sparkle with wisdom. Although the book provides excellent counsel for young and old, it does not tell a sinner what to do to be saved. This information is found only in Acts of the Apostles.

R. M. B.

Extra copies of this issue of the Blue & White may be had for 5c each—\$3.00 per hundred (minimum order 10c) while they last.



THE PREACHER WHO WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH FOR PREACHERS AND BOARD-MEMBERS

Not so long ago there was a congregation without a preacher. That is always very important. Who will be the next one? Is he good-looking? What does his wife look like? etc ...

One of the board members wondered what kind of a preacher the folks would like to have. He wrote a letter and took it to the board meeting as if someone applied for the vacant ministry. Here is what he read:

"Dearest brethren,

I hereby apply for the vacant place of pastor. I possess a few talents and have a few qualities. I was blessed to speak with a sound conviction and also wrote a few works. Some say that I am good at organizing. It is a fact that I was able to be a leader to those to whom I ministered. However some have griefs against me.

To start with, I am past the fifty mark. Nowhere did I serve longer than three years. I had to leave some congregations after I had caused some disturbances by my preaching. I was sent to prison three or four times. At one time the people got so mad they almost killed me.

I am in poor health. I have prayed many a time but God won't bother to heal me. However, I have never been too lazy to work. Folks never were desirous of paying, so I just worked sometimes all night long.

I never was much for compromising on God's Word. I didn't associate much with false teachers, and they never liked me. They laughed and scoffed at me.

To tell you the truth I have baptized very few people. I have never kept count of my sermons, and I never preached one time before the radio. I never was asked to give a commencement address.

I remember the time when I was told that I was a fool.

Well, if you think you could use me, do give me a ring. If necessary, I could still use my hands to work, if you couldn't give me much."

The boardmember finished reading and looked into very disgusted looking faces. The chairman said, "We have no time for a sickly old preacher who causes unrest and has been sent to jail. If he was called a fool and almost killed by the people, just forget him. We want a preacher of whom we could be proud."

Someone asked who the applicant was, and the answer came slowly ... the Apostle Paul ...

Something to think about my brethren ...